



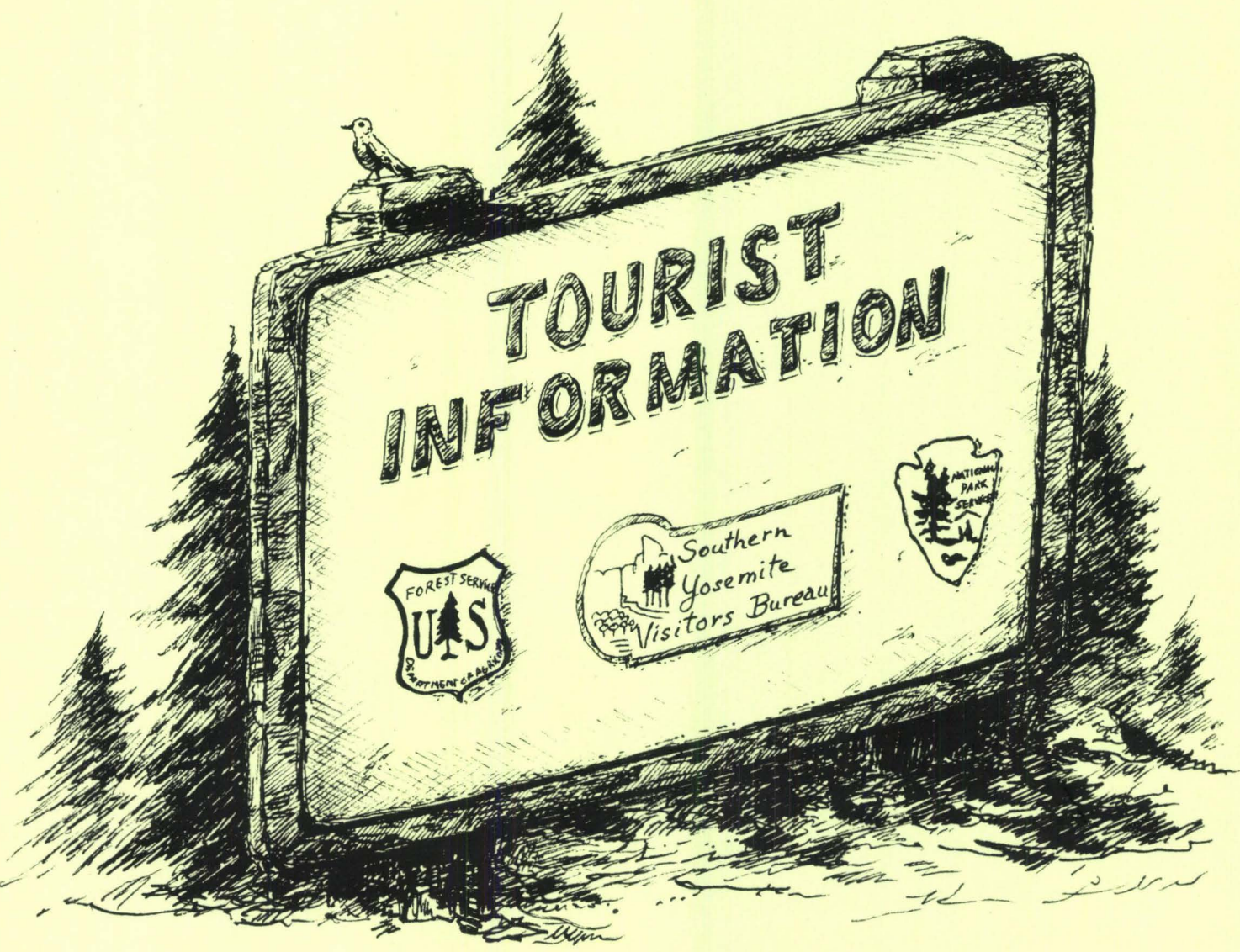
United States
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Agriculture



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Region

The Development and Analysis of Alternatives for an Interagency Tourist Information Station in Madera County, California on State Highway 41 Leading to Yosemite: An Action Plan.



THE DEVELOPMENT AND ANALYSIS OF ALTERNATIVES FOR AN
INTERAGENCY TOURIST INFORMATION STATION
IN MADERA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
ON STATE HIGHWAY 41, LEADING TO YOSEMITE

An Action Plan

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TITLE: The Development and Analysis of Alternatives for an Inter-Agency
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ABSTRACT: Yosemite National Park is world renowned for its beauty and its grandeur. It attracts tourists from all over the globe. The Mariposa Ranger District of the Sierra National Forest lies adjacent to the west boundary of Yosemite. Tourists visiting Yosemite travel through the Mariposa Ranger District on California State Highway 41. When facilities were full in Yosemite, tourists were referred back to adjacent National Forest land where they generated problems of escaped campfires, litter and sanitation. The opportunity presented itself to work with the Park Service and the local Southern Yosemite Visitor's Bureau to resolve this problem as well as support the local tourism industry in Madera County. Three decision criteria were developed and four alternatives were compared against them and a preferred alternative has been selected. An Action Plan for the preferred alternative has been developed for implementation. The decision criteria were: To Prevent Resource Damage, Improve the Information Service to the Travelling Public and Support the Local Tourism Industry. The four alternatives were: No Action, Two Separate Information Facilities, One Combined Tourist Information Facility in a Forest Service Office, and a New Tourist Information Facility Located Strategically on State Highway 41. The preferred alternative was selected and it was to locate a new tourist information facility on Highway 41. An Action Plan was developed for implementation.

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An Executive Summary

The development and analysis of alternatives for an interagency tourist information station in Madera County, California on State Highway 41, leading to Yosemite. An Action Plan.

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SUMMARY: The intent of this paper is to be a summation of past history in dealing with a land management problem generated by the popularity of Yosemite National Park. The paper develops and analyzes various alternatives. A preferred alternative is selected and an Action Plan for implementation is developed.

Yosemite National Park is known for its beauty and grandeur worldwide. It is located in California, over 300 miles north of Los Angeles, and approximately 200 miles east of San Francisco. Adjacent to Yosemite on the west side, is the Mariposa Ranger District of the Sierra National Forest. Fresno is a city located just over 200 miles north of Los Angeles. State Highway 41 extends from Fresno to Yosemite National Park passing through Madera County and the Mariposa Ranger District. Because of its popularity, Yosemite facilities are often full and visitors must be turned away. The visitors overflowed on adjacent National Forest land, creating problems with escaped campfires, litter and sanitation. This provided an opportunity for the Park Service, The Southern Yosemite Visitor's Bureau and the Forest Service to address these problems as well as support the local tourism industry. Three decision criteria and four alternatives were developed and compared. A preferred alternative was selected and an action plan written for implementation. The three selection criteria were: To Prevent Resource Damage, To Improve the Quality of Information Given to the Travelling Public and To Support the Fledgling Tourism Industry in Madera County. The four alternatives were:

- A. No Action
- B. The Dome - Which provided for two facilities, both giving tourist information.
- C. The Combined Facility - With all groups together in one building, which is the U.S. Forest Service office.
- D. Future Visitors Bureau Facility - A facility built by the Visitors Bureau with the Park Service and the Forest Service helping to staff it.

Research was a review of past Park Service and Forest Service records, then a review of management plans and projected tourism trends for Madera County. This was supplemented by notes taken at the Outdoor Recreation Management Short Course at Clemson University and personal contacts. These were the sources of information used to develop the decision criteria, the alternatives and the action plan for the preferred alternative.

The result was that Alternative D, The Future Visitors Bureau Facility, was the selected alternative. This alternative was explained in greater detail with a discussion of its future location. An action plan was written providing the recommendations to the Mariposa Ranger District recreation staff on how to implement the alternative. The Action Plan includes a copy of the contract between Madera County and the Southern Yosemite Visitors Bureau, a copy of the goals and objectives for the Visitors Bureau, also refers to staffing and support of the Visitors Bureau, monitoring effectiveness and direction to support the Visitors Bureau's efforts to locate a permanent site for the future facility.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people I wish to thank for their support, understanding and contributions. First there is my family who had to put up with me while I was struggling through the paper. Then there is my Forest Service family who had to put up with me while I tried to do two jobs at once and hid in my office dictating the paper behind closed doors.

A special thanks goes to the following: Sadie Sutton, Trudy Tucker, Tom Baxter, and my wife Beverly, all of whom read through the document and tried to figure out what in the world was going on. Gary Williams, Gary Reed and Rod Kindlund for their contributions to the cover. Sheila Miner and Andi Stevens who had to listen to my run-on sentences and try to make some sense of my dictations. To Paul Rich for his encouragement and advice. And finally to Bob Lapschies and Steve Barber for doing the graphics on the maps and the graphics on the computer for the tables.

I. INTRODUCTION

Yosemite National Park is world renowned for its beauty and grandeur attracting tourists from all over the globe. The Mariposa Ranger District of the Sierra National Forest lies adjacent to the west boundary of Yosemite. Tourists visiting Yosemite travel through the Mariposa Ranger District on State Highway 41. (See Appendix Location Map A-1). The community of Oakhurst lies about half way between Fresno and Yosemite on Highway 41. Oakhurst is located in Madera County. The popularity of Yosemite leads to occasional overcrowding and overflow conditions during the height of the tourism season. This generates management challenges for both the Park Service, the Forest Service and the Madera County Board of Supervisors.

To meet this challenge, the Park Service developed an "Out of Bounds" program to deal with campers who camped outside the boundary of developed sites. The intent of this program was to contact tourists before they reached an entrance gate and advise them of the status of camping facilities in the Park. It was also to point out other opportunities on the adjacent National Forest and private lands when Park facilities were full. To assist in this effort, the Park Service placed Park Service representatives in Forest Service facilities located along the highways leading into Yosemite. This program functioned for two or three years and was fairly effective. However, it fell on hard times as a result of budget cuts and was eventually discontinued. The only exception was the Oakhurst Ranger Station, headquarters for the Mariposa Ranger District in Oakhurst along Highway 41, where the program continued.

The tourist overflow continued and was starting to increase, resulting in problems of escaped campfires, litter and sanitation. The need to contact Yosemite tourists before they reached the entrance station, was still apparent.

The Madera County Board of Supervisors, always looking for opportunities to improve the economic conditions of the county, turned to the Industrial Development Commission to begin the organization of a County Visitors Bureau. Oakhurst provided a logical starting point for the beginning of this organizational effort because of its increasing tourism industry. Past efforts to unite the tourism industry had not been successful, but now the window of opportunity had presented itself and motel/hotel interests, several Chamber of Commerce, various resorts and recreation attractions had united with the Park Service and the Forest Service to form the Southern Yosemite Visitors Bureau (a.k.a. Southern Yosemite Area Tourism Council). The majority of the financing for the Visitors Bureau was to come through a bed tax that was developed by the County Board of Supervisors.

The stage is now set to meet the management challenges of both federal, county and private interests and at the same time, improve the quality of service to the general public. Several alternatives will be developed and analyzed in this paper to answer the challenge.

The purpose of this paper is to develop and analyze several alternatives and then select a preferred alternative. It is also to develop an action plan that will accomplish the preferred alternative. Accomplishing the objective of the action plan should give the following results:

1. It should help prevent resource damage.
2. The quality of information service to the public should be improved.
3. It should support the local tourism industry.

This paper is written to the Mariposa Ranger District Resource Officer and his Recreation Staff as a guide. It will document the rationale leading to various alternatives and provide the steps necessary for accomplishing the logistics of the selected alternative. It is anticipated that the final step of the action plan will likely be several years in the future, hopefully, no more than two or three. So it will serve as interim direction until the final step is completed.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The author's intent is to document past tourist information problems, develop decision criteria reflecting these problems and then construct alternatives to compare to the decision criteria. A preferred alternative will be selected and an action plan for implementation developed. Research for this paper was made to substantiate documentation of the past environmental impacts, develop decision criteria, develop alternatives and then determine steps for the action plan.

To understand the past problems with tourist information and develop decision criteria and alternatives, past district records and reports were reviewed, including:

Mariposa Ranger District fire records;
Mariposa Ranger District VIP records 1984;
Forest Service Manual USDA Washington, D.C.;
Yosemite Tourism Information Stations along State Highways 41 and 140;
A paper for an executive seminar by Irl Everest in 1986;
Oakhurst Area Information Center;
A report by Trudy Tucker 1986.

To support the decision criteria and evaluate the alternatives against the decision criteria, the following references were reviewed:

Sierra National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, 1986.
Yosemite National Park General Management Plan, 1980.
The Economic Impact of Travel in California, 1984.
Outdoor Recreation Management Short Course, Clemson University, September 8-26, 1986, personal notes.

To develop an action plan to implement the preferred alternative, the following personal contacts were made:

1. Hawthorne, J. 1986
2. Horning, P. 1986
3. Rea, R. 1986
4. Thorokill, K. 1986
5. Ward, J. 1986
6. Willie, C. August 28, 1986

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Methods

Research methods for this project were mostly a literature review, personal contacts and personal interviews. There is very little literature on the subject of interagency tourist information stations to be reviewed. A review of past district records and present management plans proved to be most helpful. Most of the data and logic used in developing the alternatives was gathered from working contacts and personal interviews with those who are familiar with similar type facilities within the Pacific Southwest Region of the Forest Service.

A review of class notes from the Outdoor Recreation Management Short Course at Clemson University was helpful in evaluating alternatives. The notes most helpful were from discussions on the recreationists expectations and marketing your services.

B. Development of Alternatives

1. Alternative A - No Action

A "No Action" Alternative would mean the discontinuing of the present visitor information services. A tourist then would only be able to receive current Park information at the Park entrance station. They would likely continue to stop at the official looking Forest Service Office (See Photo No. 1 Appendix, page A-2) in Oakhurst on Highway 41, but the quality of service they receive would not be very high. The Forest Service would not be keeping track of current information and status of Park campgrounds; therefore, a Yosemite visitor would not be able to

inquire of the status of the facilities until they reached the entrance station. Should Park facilities be full, a visitor is forced to backtrack to Oakhurst, 16 miles, for overnight accommodations or they could camp on adjacent National Forest land. In the past, this practice has generated a fire management problem with escaped campfires. It also generated problems with litter, since there is no facilities for garbage pickup, and with sanitation, since there are no toilets at dispersed sites on National Forest land. Should the entrance stations not be staffed in the late hours, Park visitors would continue on into Yosemite Valley and camp wherever there is space. This generates a lot of Park law enforcement and public relations problems.

A "No Action" Alternative would create a void in the support to the Southern Yosemite Visitor's Bureau and would force the Bureau to raise their profile higher to fill the gap in public service. This would be more costly to the Bureau. The tourism industry would continue to grow, but it would be without the support of the Forest Service; the Forest Service would be neutral at best.

2. Alternative B - The Dome

Under this alternative, the Forest Service, with the assistance of the Park Service, would be providing a tourist information service within the Oakhurst Ranger Station, the U.S. Forest Service Office on Highway 41. The Southern Yosemite Visitor's Bureau would also be providing a tourist information service in downtown Oakhurst at their tourist information facility, a building shaped like a dome (See Photo No. 2 Appendix, page A-2). The Forest Service would continue to support the "Out of Bounds" program initiated years ago by the Park Service, by providing a place in the Oakhurst Ranger Station for a Park Service employee to work alongside a Forest Service employee providing current tourist information. The Oakhurst Ranger Station having highway frontage, provides a convenient official looking stop for tourists. Many are foreign and unfamiliar with the area so they will ask questions because it appears they are about to leave the last vestiges of civilization. If there is any doubt in their minds, signs have been installed directing them to the building, stating that Yosemite information can be received at this point. In this alternative, the seasonal Park Service and Forest Service employee can help one another, since their responsibilities are much the same resulting in a better service to the inquiring visitor. Should the visitor stop after regular business hours, there is a 24-hour lighted self-help visitor information display. The display will have messages on fire and litter prevention, proper sanitation, and a listing of local accommodations.

The Visitor's Bureau would be providing tourist information from the Dome, which is located within Oakhurst's business district.

The Dome does not have frontage on Highway 41. After hours information speaks to local business accommodations. There are signs on Highway 41 that would direct tourists to the Dome, but access is not very convenient nor is parking. Motorhomes or vehicles pulling large trailers may have a difficult time turning around in the parking lot. There is a nearby fire station and county library, which complicates the traffic flow in the area.

Under this alternative, the Forest Service would put a seasonal employee behind a desk in the Dome to work side by side with the volunteers of the Visitor's Bureau. The Dome building itself is limited in space, therefore it would not accommodate the Park Service employee, the Forest Service employee and the Visitor's Bureau volunteer all in the same building. While some signing exists it could be improved so five more signs are added at appropriate locations. Part of the signing mentions the Chamber of Commerce, which is adjacent to the Dome (See Photo No. 2 Appendix, page A-2). The more knowledgeable tourist seeking information on facilities in the local community will be directed there. The Forest Service proposes to put a seasonal employee in the Visitor's Bureau Dome to ensure a contact with these people and to support the fledgling Visitor's Bureau as it begins to serve the growing tourism industry. The result is the Forest Service has two employees providing the same public service in two different offices.

3. Alternative C - The combined facility

This alternative would combine the Park Service, the Forest Service and the Visitor's Bureau in the Forest Service office at the Oakhurst Ranger Station. This would eliminate the dual effort and make providing tourist information much more efficient and effective for all concerned. The Oakhurst Office is located on the east side of Oakhurst, essentially beyond the business district. But it is felt that the short distance back to Oakhurst (approximately 2 miles) would not be a problem as far as directing people to the downtown accommodations.

There is an after hours display with messages on fire and litter prevention, proper sanitation and a listing of local accommodations. The Oakhurst Ranger Station has a foyer that serves as temperature control to the main building and traps warm air in the summer and cold air in the winter before a person enters the reception area. This area could serve as a visitor information area for the three agencies. A counter would be installed and air conditioning and heating would be developed. This proposal would help separate the tourist information responses from the regular administrative requests. However, people entering the office with needs for either administrative or tourist information will still have to decide which reception area can best help them. For most people it

should be relatively obvious but there is still room for confusion.

Pursuing this alternative, the Park Service and the Forest Service are using seasonals, because they anticipate providing tourist information in this manner only at the height of the tourist season, which is essentially from Memorial Day to Labor Day. The Visitor's Bureau has a longer season and wishes to provide tourist information ranging from six months to a year. Therefore, they will not only need a counter from which to serve the general public, they may also need office space within the Oakhurst Ranger Station. This can be provided for by agreement.

Service has been provided in the past at the Dome by volunteers who work part-time in the Dome providing tourist information and part-time for the Chamber of Commerce in the adjacent building. By moving the tourist information function to the Oakhurst Ranger Station, there will be a need for a new set of volunteers. This will require additional organization effort for the Visitor's Bureau.

4. Alternative D - The Future Visitor's Bureau Facility

In this alternative, the Visitor's Bureau develops their own facility located on Highway 41 with the support of the Forest Service and the Park Service. Since the Visitor's Bureau must serve the tourism industry in the entire county of Madera, it must be located on Highway 41 so that it will effectively do this. To accomplish this, the facility should be located, not in Oakhurst, but west of Oakhurst, closer to Fresno where tourists could be directed to other Madera County communities such as North Fork, Madera, Chowchilla, Raymond, Coarsegold, and Bass Lake. (See SYVB Facility Location Map Appendix, page A-3.)

This alternative has the Visitor's Bureau as the lead agency. They will provide the funding to build a new facility. The Park Service and the Forest Service will provide staffing to that facility to work with the Visitor's Bureau staff. This alternative is the most expensive of the proposed; hence, it would likely take longer to make it a reality. Should this facility be located out of Oakhurst, staffing by the various agencies would be more expensive and the logistics a little more complicated.

Under this alternative, the visitors facility would be solely dedicated to providing a service to the tourists. A cooperative theme, design and delivery will be developed. The state-of-the-art techniques would be used to present information during and after regular business hours.

For a cost analysis of the proposed alternatives, see Table 3 in the Appendix, page A-9.

IV. DISCUSSION

A. Decision Criteria

The preferred alternative will be selected on how well it resolves the management issues that are the decision criteria. These management issues are to prevent resource damage, improve public information service and support local tourism industry.

1. Prevent Resource Damage

In the past, Yosemite visitors have gotten all the way to the entrance station before they were aware that facilities were unavailable. If they past through the entrance gate late at night and proceeded on into the valley and camped out-of-bounds of any of the campgrounds, they were asked to leave the Park. They were frustrated and had to adjust their plans, so more often than not, they would wind up on National Forest land, camping at the nearest opportune location. This overflow camping on National Forest land was generally close to the entrance gate so that they would be ready to enter early the next day and improve their opportunity for getting a designated camping spot inside the Park. These campers were often from foreign lands and were unfamiliar with the proper techniques of building a campfire. Quite often when they would rise in the morning and make a beeline for the entrance gate, they would leaving an improperly built campfire still burning. In 1984, such a fire burned just over an acre, starting from a campfire built with no clearance underneath some manzanita brush. Fortunately, a contractor with a tractor was working nearby, saw the smoke and built a fire line quickly and prevented the fire from reaching its potential of 50-100 acres.

Litter and sanitation, while not as dramatic, has also become a management concern. Litter left behind by the Park visitors has degraded the quality of the scenic resource of National Forest lands that are adjacent to the Park. Sanitation became a problem when over the course of a summer season, the overflow campers tended to use the same area over and over again. The preferred alternative should allow for an opportunity to provide a public contact to issue campfire permits and through that process, explain the proper technique for building and extinguishing a campfire. It should also provide an opportunity to explain the Forest Services' "Pack it In -- Pack it Out" program. This would help manage the litter problem because the tourists would have been asked to take what they bring and would even be given a garbage bag to use. The sanitation problem can be resolved in two ways: 1) by directing people to developed sites where toilets already exist, and 2) providing portable toilets for those people who have, for whatever reason not been contacted, and continue to use the adjacent National Forest land as an overflow area.

2. Improve Public Information Service

The general public really knows very little about the difference between the Forest Service and the Park Service, and for the most part, sees them as interchangeable. This is evidenced by the fact that the Forest Service, quite often is asked questions about the road to Yosemite or receives complaints about conditions inside the Park. Because our office is 16 miles from Yosemite, looks official and has a sign saying "Ranger Station", the general public feels they will receive pertinent information about the Park. Since we are a service to the general public, it is logical that the preferred alternative would: 1) enhance the quality of service the public receives and 2) provide this service at an opportune time when the travelling public still has the greatest amount of flexibility to adjust to the circumstances that are ahead. The preferred alternative should provide current information to get people's images to conform to the reality of the present situation, that is--are facilities available in Yosemite or are they not? With effective current information, the preferred alternative should be able to provide a visitor with reasonable alternatives that will allow them to salvage their vacation, and perhaps still give them an opportunity to visit Yosemite. It's not uncommon to have a foreign visitor travelling across America in their rented motorhome, allowing only one night in Yosemite and being surprised that accommodations are not available for an overnight stay.

The selected alternative should provide a service to the visitor that is not diluted with other management concerns: people serving the public should have a primary responsibility of public information and should not have other responsibilities such as general receptionist, involving answering the telephone and handling other routine administrative matters. The recreation information personnel should have a wide range of information representing both public and private opportunities to better answer the range of inquiries that they will receive. They will receive a variety of inquiries, but different people are different in similar ways, so employees should be familiar with the range of overnight accommodations, food services and activities in the area.

3. Support Local Tourism Industry

It is Forest Service policy that all programs shall contribute and lend support to other public and private agency efforts to provide public services, income, jobs and amenities in rural areas through planning, resource management, economic development, and manpower programs. The selected alternative should be consistent with this policy and should also meet the management concern of the Southern Yosemite Visitors Bureau as they work to unite the tourism industry in Madera County.

B. Comparison of Alternatives

This discussion will be organized according to the decision criteria. For each decision criteria a comparison will be made of the alternatives as they relate to each other in satisfying the criteria. The effectiveness of each alternative will become apparent and the alternative that does the most satisfactory job of answering the decision criteria will surface.

1. Prevents Resource Damage

Sierra National Forest ranks in the top 15 National Forests in the nation in total recreation use. As can be seen by reviewing Table 1 in the Appendix, page A-8 projected recreation demand for wilderness, dispersed use and developed site use will increase from a past use in 1985 of about 4.3 million visitor days to a projected use in the year 2005 of approximately 5.7 million recreation visitor days. The projected recreation demand in the National Park System, including Yosemite is also on the increase as can be seen from reviewing Table 2 in the Appendix, page A-9. The current reading in recreation visitor days for the year 1984 was 105 million and it has gone up to 122 million in 1986 with a 3.9 percent projected increase for 1987.

In light of the projected recreation demand, it would appear that Alternative A "No Action" would not satisfy the first decision criteria to prevent resource damage. The litter and sanitation problems, while being evident for a short period of time, are generally biodegradable in nature and are not noticeable after a winter season. But the fire problem is much more significant and has a much greater potential to do lasting resource damage. A ham radio club volunteer fire patrol patrolled the area of National Forest land in the vicinity of the south entrance gate along Highway 41 from June 29 to September 3, 1984. During that period they extinguished 20 abandoned campfires. On May 29, 1984, such an abandoned campfire escaped and burned about 1 acre of brush and timber, but had the potential to burn alot more if it had not been for the prompt action by a nearby contractor who put a fireline around it with a tractor. The solution is to contact the public and educate them. To initiate no action would be to invite eventual disaster. Therefore, this alternative receives no further consideration.

Alternative B, The Dome, would have Forest Service personnel in both the Forest Service Office and in the Visitor's Bureau Office. It would not have a 24-hour display providing a fire prevention message, a litter cleanup program message (Pack It In - Pack It Out) and sanitation

information available to all visitors served because there are two offices, one with and one without the display. Alternative C, The Combined Office Alternative, would have a 24-hour lighted display that would speak to fire prevention as well as the "Pack It In - Pack It Out" program and sanitation needs. It would alert the visitor, even after hours, to the need for a campfire permit. Therefore, it is felt that Alternative B would be slightly less effective in meeting this decision criteria than Alternative C.

Under Alternative C, the 24-hour display would be located outside the Oakhurst Ranger Station. It would provide the needed information in an official "no frills" setting that would be adequate. Alternative D, The Future Visitors Bureau Facility, would be a planned facility designed to meet the needs of the visitor, the Visitors Bureau, Park Service and Forest Service. Therefore, the state-of-the-art technology could be used to present a fire prevention message and messages pertaining to litter and sanitation on a 24-hour display. Because this should be more appealing to the using public, it would appear that Alternative D would be slightly more effective than Alternative C in meeting the needs of this decision criteria.

2. Improve Public Information Service

From the very time the Forest Service opened its doors in its current office located on Highway 41, we became aware of the need to provide some information to the Yosemite visitor, particularly foreign visitors, who recognized the words "Ranger Station". In 1981 when the "Out-of-Bounds" program was initiated by the Park Service, an agreement was signed with the Forest Service to provide working space, parking spaces and allow signing to be placed in front of the building to direct Yosemite visitors inside. Once the word "Yosemite" appeared on the signs, it was apparent to all that the general public felt the need to ask questions whenever they could. Still, a number of people were not getting advance information prior to arriving at the entrance gate and were turned around at that point because the facilities they wished to use were full. As a result, the Park Service and the Forest Service both realized the need to present a more positive image as public servants and provide the tourist with an opportunity to reorganize and make the most of a potentially disappointing situation.

Alternative B, The Dome, has been doing a fairly good job of providing information to the Yosemite Visitor at the appropriate time. Under this alternative, the visitor is either contacted at the Dome in downtown Oakhurst or at the Oakhurst Ranger Station on Highway 41. From either location, one could readily go to some National Forest facilities and wait for Yosemite to open or stay in downtown

Oakhurst in motels and wait for their opportunity to go into Yosemite. For those tourists that were in a vehicle pulling either a small trailer or just carrying camping equipment, or those that intended to stay in hotels or motels, this alternative will do a fairly good job of meeting their needs. But for those tourists that are pulling large trailers or travelling in motorhomes, it would be difficult to negotiate the traffic flow into the Visitors Bureau facility at the Dome. The Dome is adjacent to the Chamber of Commerce office and the County Library and it really never was intended to have large vehicles pull into the front of the facility and then turn around. Part of the road system supplying access to the Dome is used by the local volunteer fire department. There is potential for conflict in the height of the tourist season, which is also the height of fire season for wildfires. This alternative also encourages two parallel staffing directions by the three agencies involved. The Forest Service and Park Service in the Oakhurst Ranger Station and the Forest Service and the Visitors Bureau in the Dome; which generates some inefficiencies. But for the Visitors Bureau there were some advantages in having the Dome adjacent to the Chamber of Commerce. The volunteer labor could be shared and the facility (the Dome) belongs to the Chamber of Commerce and therefore is essentially rent-free.

In comparison, Alternative C, The Forest Service Office, would have the three agencies: The Forest Service, Park Service and the Visitors Bureau working side by side behind one counter. This would provide a full range of alternatives to a Yosemite visitor. Should they encounter a situation where they must reorganize their trip, all three agencies would have phones available, so the process of adjusting for the general public could be very efficient. The Oakhurst Ranger Station has frontage on Highway 41, so parking for larger vehicles is generally not a problem. There would be some costs to the Visitors Bureau such as paying for a new phone line, finding more volunteers and just reorganizing in a new location. There would be some cost to the Forest Service for air conditioning and heating and the building of a new counter. In comparing Alternative B to C, it is felt that the improved efficiency of Alternative C in public service is worth more than the minor costs of reorganizing the reception area in the Oakhurst Ranger Station. Therefore, Alternative C is considered superior to Alternative B. Alternative D would be similar in philosophy to Alternative C in that all agencies would be under one roof. Alternative C will have a mix of visitors with administrative needs versus visitors with tourist information needs which will cause some minor confusion. The sole function of the facility in Alternative D is tourist information, therefore; it is considered slightly superior to Alternative C.

3. Support Local Tourism Industry

In 1984, California bound travelers from the U.S. and abroad spent a recordbreaking 31.1 billion, setting an all time national high for travel-generated dollars. In Madera County, U.S. travelers spent 26 million during 1984, directly providing over 500 jobs for county residents, and generating almost a million dollars in state tax revenue and just under half a million in local tax revenue. Madera County, even though it has some of the state's most spectacular scenery, ranked only 44th out of California's 58 counties in terms of dollars generated by travel spending. The preferred alternative should support Madera County's tourism industry and improve its ranking in the state for tourism income through improved marketing techniques.

Alternative B provides tourist information from two locations: The Dome and the Oakhurst Ranger Station. Signing to direct people to the Dome could be improved by adding five new signs on various approaches so that Alternative B could be enhanced as a means of marketing the service. However, when location of facilities is considered, Alternative C has highway frontage while a portion of Alternative B does not. Therefore, Alternative C is reasoned to be superior in location.

Under Alternative C, all three agencies are together under one roof and that does improve the amount of support that can be given to the local tourism industry. But the marketing of the service is still packaged in an official looking Forest Service facility. For tourists who may be intent on staying in private accommodations, they may not even expect to find a visitor's bureau in a Forest Service office. A facility, such as in Alternative D, that is built specifically for visitors information, would not have that more mundane official look about it, and would give a higher profile to the Visitors Bureau at first glance. Thus, a person looking for private accommodations would expect to find information in a facility that did not appear to be an official government facility. Under Alternative D, the Visitors Bureau would be the lead agency. The design and theme of the new visitors center would reflect that. Since most visitors are much more familiar with the standard Park Service and Forest Service symbols, their profile would not need to be as great, but would merely need to be present, while the Visitors Bureau profile would need to be greater, since it would be less well known. For these reasons, Alternative D is considered superior to Alternative C in marketing Madera County's growing tourism industry.

Considering the discussion of comparing the alternatives vs. the decision criteria, it becomes apparent that Alternative D does the best job of meeting the needs as stated in the decision criteria. Therefore, Alternative D is the preferred alternative and is selected for implementation.

Preferred Alternative

One of the first decisions that remains to be made is where will the future Visitor's facility be located. It seems reasonable to think that it should be located on Highway 41 since that is the main southern route for Yosemite tourists. The question really is: where on Highway 41 should it be located? Three possibilities are proposed: 1) the intersection of Highways 41 and 145; 2) the intersection of Highway 41 and Road 200, and 3) before the intersection of Highway 41 and 49 in Oakhurst. (See Map Appendix, page A-3.) The intersection on Highway 41 and 145, known locally as Four Corners (See Photo No. 3 Appendix photo, page A-4), would be effective and is essentially undeveloped but it is about 27 miles from Oakhurst. A site in Oakhurst just south of the intersection of Highway 49 and 41 (See Photo No. 4 Appendix photo page A-4) is the other extreme from the Four Corners site in that it is close to Oakhurst but does not well serve the rest of Madera County. At this point, a traveler has already passed Chowchilla, Madera, North Fork, Raymond and Coarsegold, all Madera County communities served by the Visitor's Bureau. The location at the intersection of Highway 41 and Road 200 (See Photo No. 5 Appendix photo page A-5) is about midway (18 miles from Oakhurst) between Fresno and Oakhurst. At this point a facility is more centrally located to serve all of Madera County. This provides a good turning point for those people who may be interested in the North Fork area, the Upper San Joaquin River or the Ansel Adams Wilderness. It can provide a scenic route through North Fork past Bass Lake and on to Yosemite. It is also less than an hour's drive from Madera and Chowchilla.

The theme of the future Visitor's Bureau facility should be in keeping with the charter to serve all of Madera County. The facility should be well lit, contemporary in color and design. Traffic flow should be within easy access off of and return to Highway 41, with parking for several large units such as boat trailers, travel trailers and motorhomes. Also needed will be public restrooms and telephones. Information counters to accommodate the Visitors' Bureau, Forest Service and Park Service will be needed. Plus, administrative office space for the Visitor's Bureau as this would be administrative headquarters for the Visitor's Bureau. Some exhibit space should be provided but should focus on Madera County. Something, for example, like a relief map with various points of interest designated. Space could also be provided for the state of the art self-service information sharing computers and videos. Still another need for space will be the display of pamphlets and books, some free and some for sale.

Probably the most appropriate agreement is a sublease where the Forest Service and the Park Service lease space from the Visitors' Bureau.

D. Action Plan

| <u>What</u> | <u>Who</u> | <u>When</u> |
|---|---|---------------|
| 1. Establish a liaison with Madera County Industrial Development Commission as it works to develop the tourism council. | District Ranger | April 1, 1986 |
| 2. Support the Southern Yosemite Tourism Council as it develops a contract with Madera County Board of Supervisors (See Contract, Appendix page A-6). | District Ranger | June, 1986 |
| 3. Help write the goals and objectives for the tourism council. (See Appendix page A-7). | Irl Everest, USFS, Steve Welch, Bass Lake Chamber of Commerce, Julia Smith, North Fork Chamber of Commerce, Juanita Summers, Southern Yosemite Area Tourism Council; Ralph Nalley, Eastern Madera Co. Chamber of Commerce; Caryl Stafford, Sierra Skyranch. | May 1, 1986 |
| 4. Continue to serve as a resource and board member on the Visitor's Bureau. | District Ranger, Recreation Officer and Recreation Tech., USFS. | Continuing |
| 5. Support the Visitor's Bureau by providing a seasonal or temporary information facility in the Oakhurst Office with Yosemite National Park. | District Ranger, Recreation Officer and Recreation Staff. | May 15, 1987 |

- | | | | |
|----|--|--|----------------|
| 6. | Monitor effectiveness of combined facility in Forest Service Officer; a) Count visitors serviced; b) Contact local businesses to determine effectiveness of referrals; c) Patrol traditional overflow areas at South Gate of Yosemite; d) Get feedback from South Gate Entrance Station. | District Ranger, Resource Officer, Recreation Staff, Fire Management Officer, Fire Prevention Staff. | Summer of 1987 |
| 7. | If Item #5 is successful, continue the process until permanent Visitor's Bureau facility is built. | District Ranger, Resource Officer and Recreation Staff. | FY 88? |
| 8. | Support planning efforts to develop permanent Visitor's Bureau facility. Support means serving as a resource by: a) share expertise; b) plan on staffing; c) help develop agreements; d) encourage Madera County Board of Supervisors as they support the tourism bureau. | District Ranger, Resource Officer and Recreation Staff. | Continuing |

V. SUMMARY

The Mariposa Ranger District of the Sierra National Forest lies adjacent to the west boundary of Yosemite National Park. State Highway 41 extends northeast from Fresno through Oakhurst, through the Mariposa Ranger District to Yosemite National Park. The international popularity of Yosemite generates problems from overflowing tourists when the Park facilities are full. Problems are land management problems such as fire prevention, litter and sanitation.

Madera County, in which Oakhurst is located, has not been able to capture its fair share of the tourism dollar. Through a county industrial development commission the Madera County Board of Supervisors encouraged the development of a Visitor's Bureau and supported that development through allocation of bed tax funds.

The window of opportunity has now presented itself for the Forest Service to cure the land management problems by cooperating with the Park Service in public education. It is also an opportunity to improve quality of service provided to the visiting public and an opportunity to support the local tourism industry.

There are four alternatives developed and they were compared against three decision criteria and a preferred alternative was selected. The four alternatives were Alternative A, No Action; Alternative B, The Dome which meant providing tourist information from two facilities, the

Visitor's Bureau Dome and the USFS Office; Alternative C, the combined facility which would have all groups together in one building; and Alternative D, the future Visitor's Bureau facility, a facility built by the Visitor's Bureau with the Park Service and Forest Service helping to staff it.

The decision criteria to which the Alternatives were compared were to prevent resource damage caused by rejected tourists who could not use Yosemite's facilities because they were full. These are problems of fire, litter and sanitation. The second decision criteria were to improve the information service to the traveling public. The third criteria was to support local industry.

After comparing the Alternatives to the Decision Criteria, it was found that Alternative A, No Action, was not feasible. Alternative B, the Dome, was found to be less practical and efficient than Alternatives C and D. Alternative C, the combined facility, was found to be more efficient but still did not serve the tourism industry of Madera County as well as Alternative D, the future Visitor's Bureau site facility. Therefore, Alternative D was selected as the Preferred Alternative.

Alternative D was refined and then an action plan was written to bring it about and monitor it.

VI. LITERATURE CITED

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VII. APPENDIX

LOCATION MAP

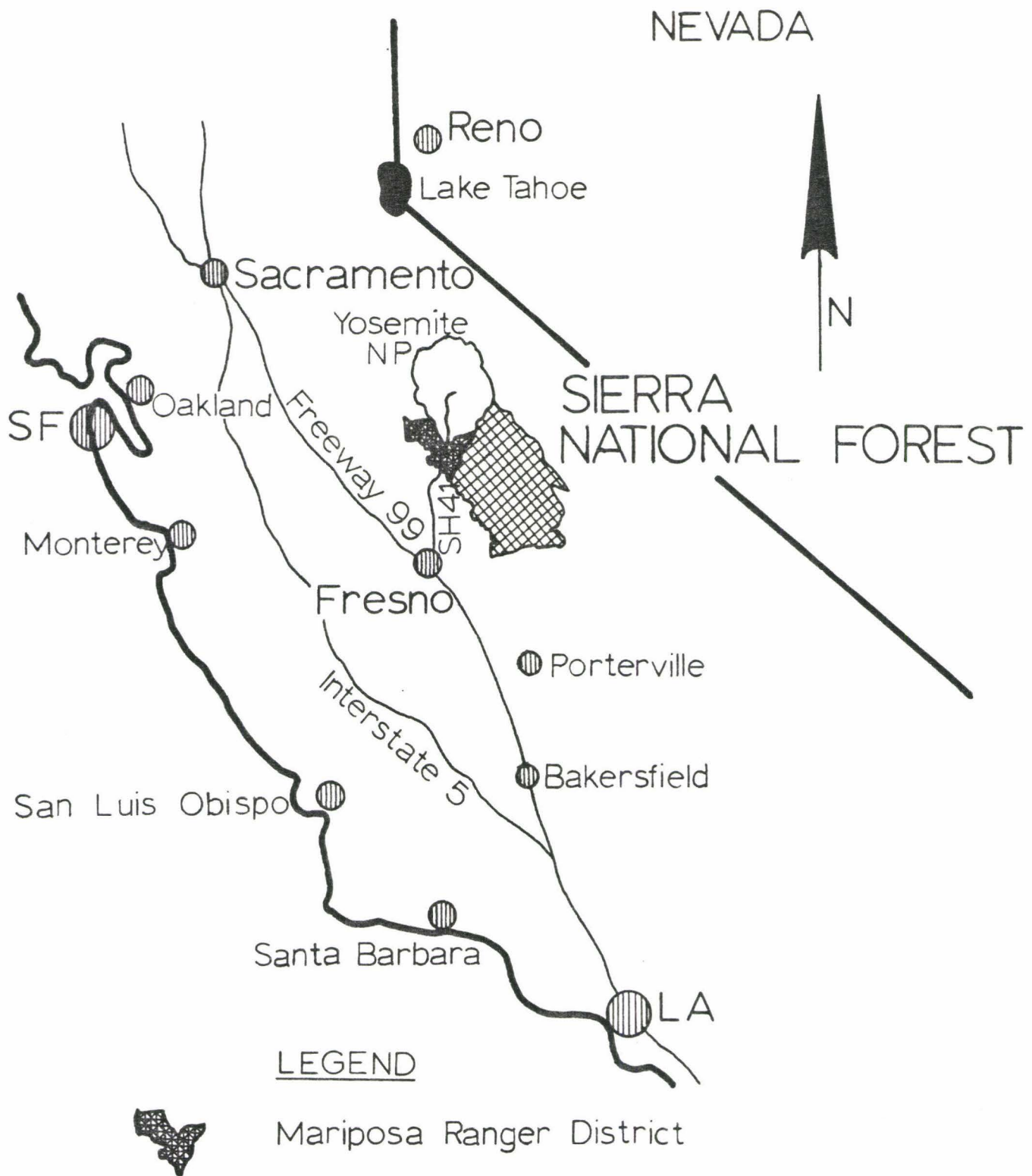




Photo No. 1 - Oakhurst Ranger
Station. Headquarters
for Mariposa District,
Sierra National Forest.



Photo No. 2 - The "Dome". Head-
quarters for the
Southern Yosemite
Visitors Bureau.

Southern Yosemite Visitors
Bureau Proposed Facility
Site Map

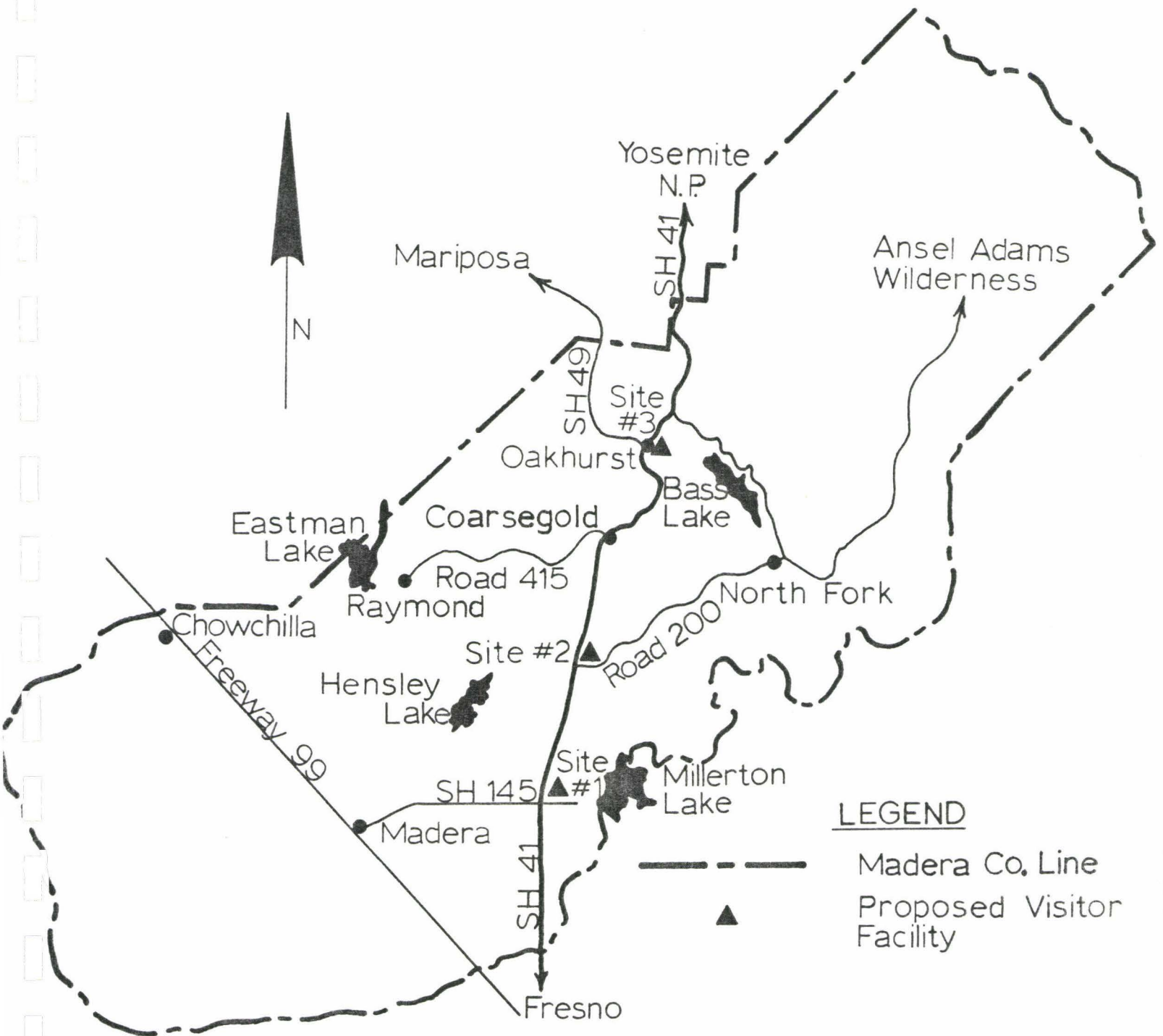




Photo No. 3 - Site No. 1 Four
Corners



Photo No. 4 - Site No. 3 Intersection
of State Highway 41
and State Highway 49
in Oakhurst.



Photo No. 5 - Site No. 2 The inter-
section of State
Highway 41 and Madera
County Road 200.

AGREEMENT

This Agreement is made and effective this 1st day of July, 1986, by and between the COUNTY OF MADERA, a California public entity (hereinafter referred to as "County") and the SOUTHERN YOSEMITE AREA TOURISM COUNCIL, INC., a California nonprofit public benefit corporation (hereinafter referred to as "SYATC") with reference to the following facts:

R E C I T A L S

A. County desires SYATC to provide services designed to advertise and promote the interests of the County of Madera and its citizens by methods which, in the judgment of the SYATC, will be of the greatest benefit to the people of the County.

B. SYATC is willing to undertake the services hereinafter set forth on behalf of the County; for the purpose of promoting tourism and travel to the County of Madera.

NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of the mutual promises and agreements of the parties hereto, it is hereby agreed by and between the parties as follows:

1. The SYATC hereby agrees to provide the following services to the County of Madera:

(a) To maintain suitable quarters and employ competent personnel to carry on the promotional activities enumerated herein.

(b) To develop local public awareness of the desirability, benefits and importance of the travel and tourism industry to the economy of Madera County.

(c) To demonstrate to the general public the advantages that Madera County has to offer visitors from other parts of the State, the nation and the world.

(d) Promptly answer all correspondence relative to visitor facilities in the County of Madera and disseminate information by correspondence, newspaper publicity and personal contacts favorably advertising such advantages and opportunities.

(e) To review the facilities and services, both public and private, in the County of Madera, necessary to support visitor's activities and to advise the County of problems and needed improvements for support of tourism.

(f) Generally, to promote visitor activities that will bring additional revenue to the County and to businesses within the County.

(g) Furnish to the County Board of Supervisors for their review and approval an annual line-item budget for its entire operation.

(h) Furnish to the County an annual activity plan containing programs and specific tasks. Said plan shall

contain timetables for the accomplishment of specific objectives for each fiscal year (the County fiscal year presently ends June 30).

(i) Furnish to the County an annual management effectiveness report detailing the extent to which the annual activity plan for the previous fiscal year had been met. The annual management effectiveness report shall be furnished to the County on or before sixty (60) days after the end of each fiscal year.

(j) Furnish to the County quarterly disbursement statements for the SYATC. These statements shall be submitted no later than October 31, January 31, April 30 and July 31.

2. In consideration of the services enumerated in Paragraph 1 above, the County shall make the following payments to SYATC:

(a) For fiscal year 1986/1987, the County shall pay to SYATC the amount of Eleven Thousand Dollars (\$11,000.00) per fiscal quarter. This amount is subject to renegotiation for each succeeding one year term.

(b) All payments made by the County to the SYATC shall be made not later than ten (10) days after the end of each quarter of the fiscal year, or on such other basis agreed to by the parties.

(c) All such funds shall be expended by the SYATC for SYATC activities only as enumerated herein.

3. The SYATC shall not engage in any activities not expressly enumerated herein without the written approval of the County Board of Supervisors.

4. Nothing in this Agreement shall prevent the SYATC from requesting the appropriation of additional sums, or the County from appropriating such sums, for specific projects which the County may desire to have performed by the SYATC and which the SYATC is willing to perform.

5. One of the sources of general revenue the County contemplates using to fund this Agreement is bed tax revenue. At its election, the County may withhold any payments otherwise required by Paragraph 2 herein or may immediately terminate this Agreement if a lawsuit is filed against the County challenging the validity of the County's bed tax.

6. All records of the SYATC shall be open to inspection by the County upon reasonable notice and during normal business hours. Additionally, all minutes and other documents related to Board meetings shall be available to the public.

7. The term of this Agreement shall commence on July 1, 1986, and terminate on June 30, 1987. This Agreement shall automatically be renewed on a yearly basis for a one (1) year term (July 1 through June 30) unless either party provides

written notice of cancellation at least sixty (60) days prior to the expiration of the contract year.

8. (a) Prior to giving SYATC written notice of termination as contemplated in subparagraph (b) below, County shall give to SYATC written notice of default specifying the nature of the default and demanding cure thereof within thirty (30) days, or in the case of a default not susceptible of being cured within said 30-day period, the notice of default shall request the SYATC to take and continue action to cure such default with all reasonable diligence until the same is cured but for not more than ninety (90) days from such notice. In the event a default is cured within the time provided in the notice of default, then no notice of termination shall be given by the County to SYATC. In the event any default specified in a notice from the County is not cured within the time provided therefor, then County may terminate this Agreement as provided in subparagraph (b).

(b) This Agreement may be terminated by either party upon default by the other party in its obligations hereunder by giving six (6) months written notice to the defaulting party of intent to terminate. Such notice to terminate may be given by the County only after complying with the provisions of subparagraph (a) above. In the event of termination pursuant to this subparagraph (b), the Agreement shall continue in force for the balance of the fiscal year during which the notice to terminate

is given. Any uncommitted or unexpended budget funds at the end of such fiscal year shall be returned by the SYATC to the County.

9. The SYATC acknowledges and agrees that it shall not enter into any activity, transaction or undertaking which may be construed, implied or inferred that the SYATC is acting in a capacity of an agent or representative of the County. The SYATC agrees to and shall hold the County, its officers, its agents, employees and representatives harmless from and against any and all claims, demands, losses, causes of action or liabilities which may be based upon or arise out of, or in connection with, any claims by a third party that the SYATC has acted as the agent or representative of the County thereby giving rise to a claim against the County. County agrees that the SYATC is not now, nor shall it ever be, the agent or representative of the County in any activity, transaction or undertaking.

10. All written notices and demands of any kind which either party may be required or may desire to serve upon the other in connection with the Agreement may be served either personally, by registered or certified mail, or by first class mail, postage prepaid, addressed as follows:

To County:

Madera County
209 W. Yosemite
Madera, Ca. 93637
Attn: Board of Supervisors

To SYATC:

Southern Yosemite Area Tourism Council
P. O. Box 1404
49074 CIVIC CIRCLE DRIVE
[Street Address]
Oakhurst, CA 93644

11. SYATC shall notify the County in writing of any amendments or other changes to its Articles or Bylaws.

12. This Agreement constitutes the entire Agreement between the parties hereto with respect to the subject hereof and may not be modified, amended or otherwise changed in any manner except by mutual written consent of the parties.

13. This Agreement shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the State of California.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, this Agreement has been executed by the parties as of the day and year first above indicated.

COUNTY OF MADERA

By: Don Darnell

Approved as to Form:

ATTEST:

Michael D. Ott
MICHAEL D. OTT
County Counsel

Wanda Bradley
Clerk, Board of Supervisors

SOUTHERN YOSEMITE AREA TOURISM
COUNCIL, INC., a California
Non-Profit Public Benefit Corporation

By: [Signature]

MJB1:pp:SYATCAGR

SOUTHERN YOSEMITE AREA TOURISM COUNCIL

Purpose

The purpose of this Corporation is to operate a non-profit organization for the promotion of tourism in Madera County. Funding for its activities shall be from the County general fund. More specifically, our objectives shall consist of the following:

Objectives

1. To serve as one unified voice which represents the tourism industry within Madera County;
2. To disseminate promotional literature and other forms of advertising to potential visitors;
3. To provide information on our recreational facilities and resources to visitors;
4. To increase awareness of the benefits of tourism to Madera County residents;
5. To collect data on recreational use for later use by public and private entities.

Goals

Short Term (Within First Year)

1. Publish tourism brochure;
2. Get office equipped and staffed;
3. Revise Corporation By-Laws and Articles of Incorporation;
4. Finalize contract with County for needed funding;
5. Commence Public Relations activities;
6. Investigate locating Motel Association toll-free telephone number at Council office.

Long Term (After First Year)

1. Establish and staff Visitor's Center on Highway 41;
2. Facilitate development of tourism facilities through coordination with Yosemite National Park, Yosemite Park & Curry Company, Sierra National Forest, and other surrounding tourism agencies;
3. Encourage development of wintertime recreational opportunities in support of increasing year-round tourism;
4. Support improved transportation access to area;
5. Provide public education on the benefits of a strong tourism industry;
6. Establish an identity which will reflect an image for Madera County as a tourist destination;
7. Establish a full time position for an Executive Director;
8. Continue with established relations with State Office of Tourism.

TABLE 1

PROJECTED RECREATION DEMAND

FOR THE SIERRA NATIONAL FOREST

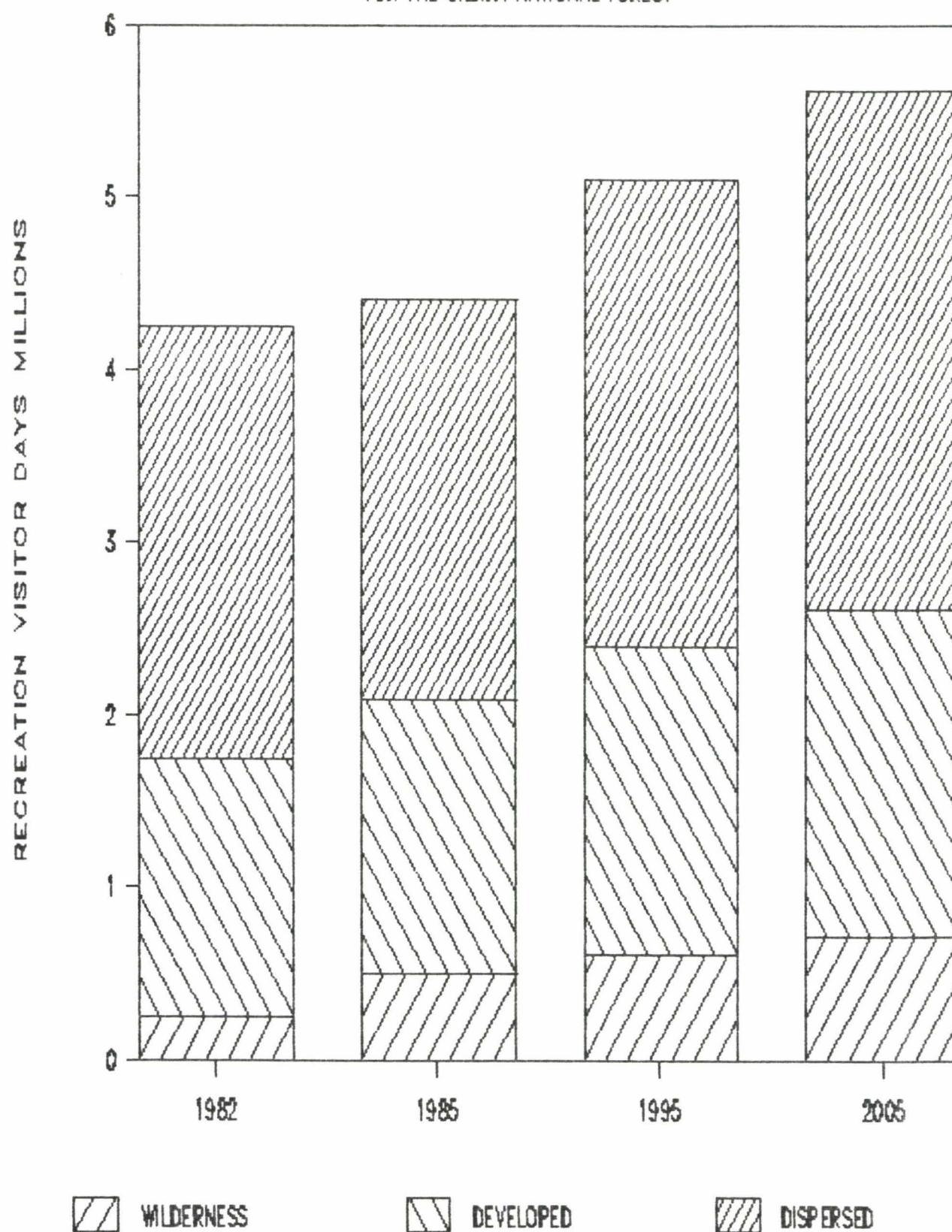
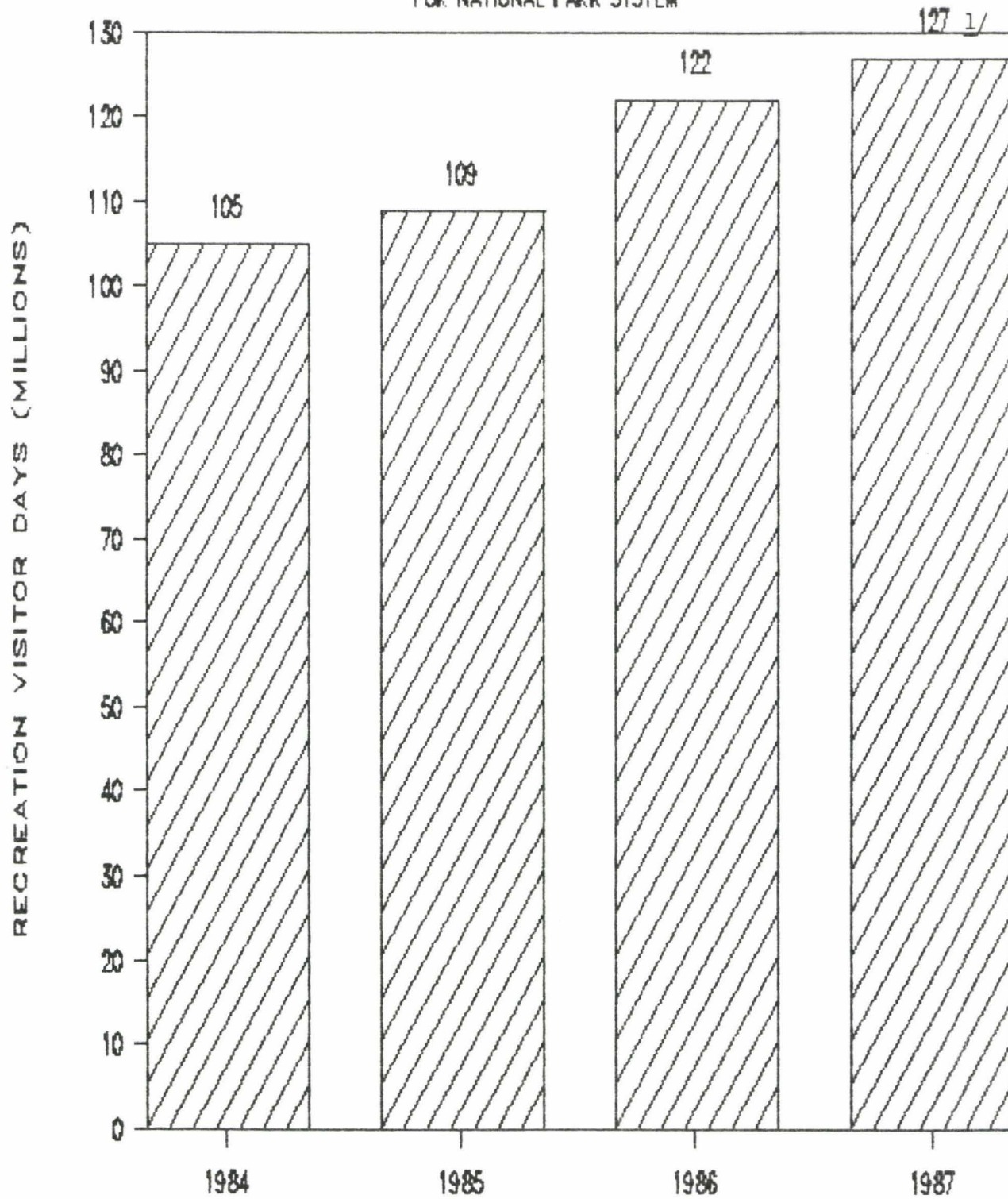


TABLE 2

RECREATION VISITOR DAYS

FOR NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM



1/ Projected increase over actual count for 1986 is 3.9%.

TABLE 3

A COST ANALYSIS OF THE PROPOSED ALTERNATIVES

Alternative A - No Action:

| | | |
|---|---|---------|
| - Citations for escaped campfires, approximately 20 per season. | | |
| 20 citations x \$50/citation ¹ | = | \$1,000 |
| - Fire suppression costs for the Goat Fire (approximately 1 acre) | = | \$7,500 |
| - Portable toilets plus pumping | | |
| 2 portable toilets @ \$2,100/toilet | = | \$4,200 |
| - Litter pickup, mostly plastic, bottles and cans by a Fire Prevention Technician (GS-6). | | |
| 6 person days x\$ 85/day | = | \$ 510 |
| | | <hr/> |
| | | 13,210 |

1/ Cost of processing.

Alternative B. The Dome

| | |
|---|-----------|
| - Two Forest Service seasonal employees (GS-4) for 6 pay periods. 6 PP x \$560/PP | = \$6,720 |
| - A Park Service seasonal employee (GS-4) for 6 pay periods. 6 PP x \$560/PP | = \$3,360 |
| - A new phone for Forest Service employee in Dome plus miscellaneous expenses of adapting to a new office. | = \$ 150 |
| - Five new tourist information signs installed by California Department of Transportation free of charge as a public service. | = 0 |
| | <hr/> |
| | \$10,230 |

Alternative C - The Combined Facility

| | | |
|--|---|---------|
| - One Forest Service employee (GS-4) for 6 pay periods. | = | \$3,360 |
| - One Park Service employee (GS-4) for 6 pay periods. | = | \$3,360 |
| - Changing the foyer into a reception area: | | |
| Construct a new counter | = | \$ 200 |
| Air Conditioning and Heating | = | \$1,400 |
| New Phones (three) | = | \$ 150 |
| New light fixture and fan | = | \$ 200 |
| - Additional expense to Visitor's Bureau to recruit more volunteers: | | |
| 3 person days for Executive Director at \$20,000/year or approximately \$83.00/day. | = | \$ 250 |
| | | <hr/> |
| | | \$8,920 |

Alternative D - The Future Visitor's Bureau Facility

| | | |
|---|---|---------------|
| - Purchase land | = | \$ 20-30,000 |
| - Construct new facility | = | \$150-200,000 |
| - Sublease cost to Forest Service and Park Service per square foot. | | |
| - Estimate average cost of office space in Oakhurst at this time per square foot is \$0.50. Assuming each agency needed 100 square feet the total annual cost is | = | \$ 100 |
| | | <hr/> |
| | | \$170-230,100 |